

CD 2006 -- 81/82

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FACULTY OF MUSIC



2006-2007 SEASON

WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET GREAT MUSIC

28/18 -- 2308 09
Monday, November 13, 2006
7:30 pm. Walter Hall

Chamber Music Series
Presents

So Percussion

Josh Quillen, Adam Sliwinski, Jason Treuting, Lawson White

PROGRAM

Steve Reich

Drumming, Part 1

Paul Lansky

Threads

1. Prelude
2. Recitative
3. Chorus
4. Aria
5. Recitative
6. Chorus
7. Aria
8. Recitative
9. Chorus
10. Chorale Prelude

INTERMISSION

David Lang

the so-called laws of nature

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the Visiting Chamber Ensembles program at the Faculty of Music.

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Program Notes

Drumming

STEVE REICH

For *So Percussion*, the reasons to play Steve Reich's *Drumming* are simple: it is exhilarating to perform, it is elemental yet intelligent, and it is fun to share with audiences. The other story, however, is a revolutionary approach to musical composition. Although every note of *Drumming* rocks, its existence is due to the composer's tireless search for new modes of musical expression.

For Reich, *Drumming* was both a refinement of past techniques and a departure for new ones. Most importantly, he wanted audiences to hear all of the processes that make the music what it is. One rhythm permeates the entire piece. At the beginning, two players dramatically build that rhythm up one note at a time. This is a bold statement: Many other composers of Reich's generation worked very hard to construct layers of mind-boggling complexity in their music.

Once this rhythm builds up, one player starts moving slightly faster than the other. The result sounds at first like a musical train wreck, but gradually a new rhythm emerges, which is really the same rhythm set in different places. Other musicians then begin picking out patterns from this grid. These patterns move through three different instrument families (drums, marimbas, glockenspiels), and gradually up four octaves over the course of an hour.

Reich's study in Africa enabled him to write music that had to be percussion music. Its ecstatic grooves communicate directly, without pretense. *Drumming* captures the immediacy of that experience, and gives us a reference point for work still to come.

Threads (2005)

PAUL LANSKY

Threads, written for *Sō Percussion* in 2005, is a half-hour long 'cantata' for percussion quartet in ten short movements. There are three 'threads' that are interwoven in the piece: Arias and Preludes that focus on the metallic pitched sounds of vibraphones, glockenspiel and pipes; Choruses in which drumming predominates; and Recitatives made largely from Cage-like noise instruments, bottles, flower pots, crotales, etc. The aim of the different threads is to highlight the wide range of qualities that percussion instruments are capable of, from lyrical and tender to forceful and aggressive, and weave them into one continuous 'thread'. The movements are performed without interruption.

- Paul Lansky

the so-called laws of nature (2002)

DAVID LANG

I went to college to study science. I was expected to become a doctor, or at the very least a medical researcher, and I spent very much of my undergraduate years studying math and chemistry and physics, hanging out with future scientists, going to their parties, sharing their apartments, eavesdropping on their conversations. I remember a particularly heated discussion about a quote from Wittgenstein: "At the basis of the whole modern view of the world lies the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanation of natural phenomena." This quote rankled all us future scientists, as it implied that science can't explain the universe but can only offer mere descriptions of things observed. Over the years it occurred to me that this could be rephrased as a musical problem. Because

music is made of proportions and numbers and formulas and patterns I always wonder what these numbers actually mean. Do the numbers themselves generate a certain structure, creating the context and the meaning and the form, or are they just the incidental byproducts of other, deeper, more mysterious processes? My piece *The So-called Laws of Nature* tries to explore the "meaning" of various processes and formulas. The individual parts are virtually identical-the percussionists play identical patterns throughout, playing unison

rhythms on subtly different instruments. Most of these instruments the performers are required to build themselves. Some of the patterns between the players are displaced in time. Some are on instruments which have a kind of incoherence built into their sound. Does the music come out of the patterns or in spite of them? I am not sure which, but I know that this piece is as close to becoming a scientist as I will ever get.

- David Lang



Visiting Chamber Groups at the Faculty of Music

Students learning from the world's best

Our chamber music program is thriving thanks to our work on stage and in the classroom as well. For the stage, we have this acclaimed Monday evening Chamber Music Series. For the classroom, we continue to build our Visiting Chamber Groups program. This program would see five renowned chamber ensembles at the Faculty annually, each for several days of masterclasses, ensemble coaching and a guest performance as part of our Chamber Music Series. The St. Lawrence String Quartet is at present the only chamber group currently engaged by the Faculty of Music as regular visiting artists. We are determined to retain our association with this quartet and secure additional arrangements with one more string ensemble, a piano chamber group (like the Gryphon Trio), one wind quintet, and a brass group.

To learn more about how your financial support can help make this academic priority a reality, please contact Sarah Brown at 416-946-3145.

Biography

There was a line, and **So Percussion** crossed it. They'd never been just another modern performance ensemble anyway. Following two acclaimed albums of rigorous music by modern master Steve Reich and even-more-modern masters David Lang and Evan Ziporyn, as well as ongoing collaborations with hepcat Björk producers Matmos, the 20-something quartet has discovered a bold new voice: their own.

Called "astonishing and entrancing" by *Billboard*, "brilliant" by the *New York Times*, the discovery is perfectly appropriate. Coming together in the green pastures of New Haven, at Yale's graduate program, So Percussion was created to give fresh voice to what co-founder Jason Treuting calls "funky contemporary music." Devoted to the conceptual dreamscapes of Reich, Iannis Xenakis, John Cage, and others, So established a disciplined work ethic, learning pieces whole -- memorized and absorbed -- instead of merely read. In performance, music stands were jettisoned for a stunning live dynamic. A blind call to Bang on a Can founder David Lang yielded a commission. Called "a must-hear" by *Billboard*, their self-titled debut featured Lang's "the so-called laws of nature."

In 2004, realizing Steve Reich's nine-part "Drumming" as a quartet, they made one small step for music, one radical step for a percussion group: they overdubbed -- and to great success. Having explored the past, in the form of Reich's classics, and the present, in the form of Lang and Ziporyn's freshest, it was time for S? to start exploring the future.

In that vein, their newest CD/DVD *Amid the Noise* began as an after-hours project. Eager to expand their palette, So members Jason Treuting, Adam Sliwinski, and Lawson White experimented with glockenspiel, toy piano, vibraphones, bowed marimba,

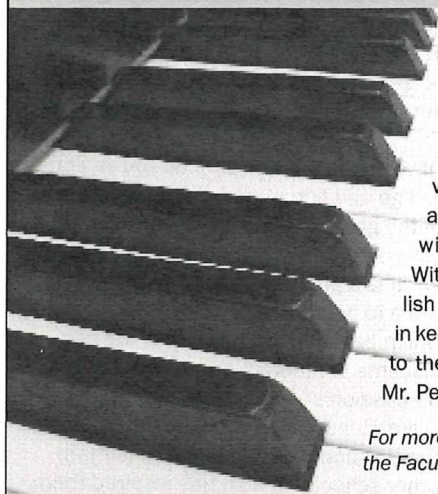
melodica, tuned and prepared pipes, metals, a wayward ethernet port, and all kinds of sound programming. The resulting idiosyncratic tone explorations were synchronized to Jenise Treuting's haunting films of street scenes in Manhattan and Tokyo. In 2006-2007, So is performing amid the noise across the country with electronic gurus Matmos.

"If you're sick of the sounds you've got, you go and find more," declares Sliwinski of the group's sonic philosophy. "There's always something to hit or rub or whatever." It is a philosophy they have taken with them to countless educational programs, which have ranged from teaching adolescents to masterclasses with student percussionists and composers at Harvard, Duke, Princeton, the University of Texas, the University of Oklahoma, and many other schools. It also has inspired them to commission dozens of composers to write for this most eclectic of instrumental groups. With the list spanning from such notables as David Lang and Paul Lansky to emerging talents Dennis DeSantis and Suzanne Farrin, this unique repertoire has been heard at the Miller Theatre and Carnegie Hall in New York, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Walker Center in Minneapolis, to name a few. In fact, So is one of the only outfits that can play at a major concert hall and with indie's hippest producers within 24 hours.

With an audience comprised of "both kinds of blue hair... elderly matron here, arty punk there" (as the *Boston Globe* described it), So Percussion makes a rare and wonderful breed of music that both compels instantly and offers vast rewards for engaged listening. Edgy (at least in the sense that little other music sounds like this) and ancient (in that people have been hitting objects with sticks for many eons), the members of So Percussion are nothing if not themselves, imaginary lines or not.

Imagine Perfect Resonance

A chord is struck, but never fades, sustained forever.



Kenneth Peacock was a distinguished alumnus of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music. His body of work, as a composer and researcher for half a century, has made a significant impact on musical life in Canada. The Faculty of Music was very grateful to learn that Mr. Peacock had made a bequest to the University of Toronto in his will for the benefit of our music programs. With this legacy gift, the Faculty of Music will establish the Kenneth H. Peacock Lecture Series in Music in keeping with his lifelong interest in and contribution to the multi-dimensional study of music. Thank you Mr. Peacock.

For more information on Planned Giving please contact the Faculty of Music Development Office at 416-946-3145.



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Please contact Sarah Brown at 416-946-3145 if you would like to learn more about this program.

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